

**Radical  
Statistics  
67**

**Spring '98**

The **Radical Statistics Group** is a group of individuals based on the distribution of this newsletter. The small amount of central administration work is done by a committee known as 'The Troika', and elected at the Annual General Meeting. The editorship of this newsletter rotates; details of how to subscribe are given below and details of how to contribute are given on the inside back cover. Apart from producing this newsletter, the work of the RSG is done by its sub-groups whose membership is open to all interested parties. Please consult the contact people below if you wish to get involved. Use the newsletter to advertise if you wish to start a new group.

Radical Statistics electronic discussion group: [radstats@mailbase.ac.uk](mailto:radstats@mailbase.ac.uk)

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### The Troika

**Dave Gordon**, Department of Social Policy, School for Policy Studies, Rodney Lodge, Bristol BS8 4EA, Tel. 0117 974 1117 x222, [Dave.Gordon@bris.ac.uk](mailto:Dave.Gordon@bris.ac.uk)

**Andrew Philpott Morgan**, Lower Maisonette, 20 Dunollie Road, London, NW5 2XP, Tel. 0171 813 4565

**Julian Wells**, 51 Coloumb Street, London SE 10. 9HA . Tel : (0181) 853 0014  
[101330.1123@compuserve.com](mailto:101330.1123@compuserve.com)

This newsletter was edited by **Danny Dorling and Ludi Simpson**

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**Review editor: Nicky Dennis**, 69 Harpes Road, Oxford, OX2 7OJ. Tel: (0171) 873 6360 (w), (-1865) 558460 (h).

**Publications archive: Christy Maginn**, 20 Gwenfron Road, Kenington, Liverpool, L6 9AL. Tel: (0151)-260-2253.

Deadlines for newsletter copy: **30th March 1998, June 30th 1998, 30th November 1998** (see inside back cover)

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### Subgroups

**Health: Alison Macfarlane**, 40 Warwick Rd., St. Albans, Herts, AL1 4DL. Tel/fax: (01727) 852111 (h). Email [Alison.Macfarlane@perinat.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Alison.Macfarlane@perinat.ox.ac.uk)

**Education: Susan Starkings**, South Bank University, School of Computing, 103 Borough Rd, London, SE1 0AA. Tel : (0171) 815 7455 (w)

**Economic: Andrew Philpott Morgan**, Lower Maisonette, 20 Dunollie Road, London, NW5 2XP. Tel: (0171) 813 4565.

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For general correspondence write to:

**Radical Statistics**, c/o 10 Ruskin Avenue, Heaton, Bradford, BD9 6ER.

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*Radical Statistics* is usually produced three times per year.

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INEQUALITIES  
WHERE ARE WE NOW  
AND WHAT CAN BE DONE?

RADICAL STATISTICS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Saturday 28 February 1998  
10 am to 5 pm

School for Policy Studies  
University of Bristol  
Rodney Lodge, Grange Road  
Bristol BS8 4EA

SESSIONS INCLUDE:

PETER TOWNSEND "Ending world poverty in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – what needs to be done?"

GEORGE DAVEY-SMITH "How should we end inequalities in health"

DANNY DORLING "Inequalities in health between areas"  
(Does voting Tory help you live longer?)

WALTER BARKER "Inequalities in service provision: how research findings are ignored"

CHRISTINA PANTAZIS "Inequalities in justice, crime and punishment"

INEQUALITIES IN HOUSING AND EDUCATION – Speakers to be confirmed

Followed by an evening at a restaurant or pub for those who can stay

CONFERENCE DETAILS:

£20 waged/ £10 unwaged which covers morning coffee with biscuits, a three course sit  
down lunch (vegetarians catered for) and afternoon tea with home-made cakes  
– so please try to book in advance!

Overnight accommodation available in Bristol if needed.

Please send booking details with cheques made payable to: RADICAL STATISTICS  
and requests for further information to:

Dave Gordon, School for Policy Studies, 8 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TN

e-mail: [dave.gordon@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:dave.gordon@bristol.ac.uk)

0117 9289000 x 8515 (work)

0117 9288578 (work fax)

0117 9240344 (home)

0117 9836559 (home fax/ansaphone – don't be put off)

## Subscribe to Radical Statistics!

On joining, you will receive *Radical Statistics* three times a year and all news of special events. Make cheques payable to 'Radical Statistics'. Send this form to *Radical Statistics (subs), c/o* 10 Ruskin Avenue, Bradford BD9 6EB

Ring the letters that describe your interests.

You or other *Radical Statistics* subscribers can use this information to find others to discuss potential new work for existing or new subgroups.

### Annual rates:

Waged	£12
Low-waged (self-defined)	£5
Unwaged	£3
Institutions	£20

(These same rates also apply to overseas subscribers, but sterling cheques only please)

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I enclose the appropriate subscription or have filled in the standing order details below.

Your name:  
Your address:

Postcode:

Home telephone:  
Work telephone:  
FAX:  
Email:

I may be interested in working with others on (up to six please!):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| A Anti-poverty/welfare stats.               | N Developing countries                              |
| B Crime, law, police stats.                 | O Housing   |
| C Peace/nuclear arms                        | P Un/Employment                                     |
| D Philosophy and politics of statistics     | S Surveys/statistics for community groups/campaigns |
| E Education                                 | T Transport   |
| F Economic statistics                       | U Trades Union campaigns                            |
| G Government statistics                     | W Statisticians as workers                          |
| H Health                                    | X Women in statistics                               |
| I Internationalisation and trade statistics | Y Green/Environment issues                          |
| L Local government                          | Z Other (write in):                                 |
| M Teaching statistics                       |   |

### Standing orders:

If you wish to pay by standing order, please complete and sign this panel, but send it to *Radical Statistics* so that we can update our records before sending on to your bank.

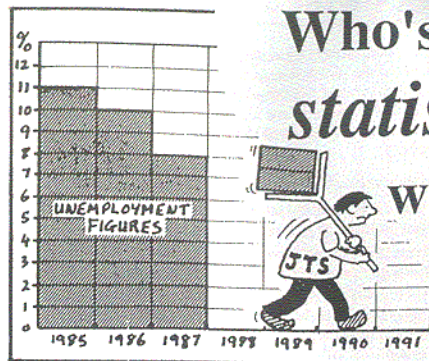
Your bank: \_\_\_\_\_ Sort code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bank's full address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please deduct from my account no.:

the sum of: \_\_\_\_\_ on receipt of this form, and on the same date each year, and credit the account of *Radical Statistics, a/c* 50504569, Co-operative Bank Islington Branch, 1 Islington High Street, London N1 9TR. Sort code: 08-90-33.

This cancels all previous standing orders to *Radical Statistics*.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



# Who's being *statistical* with the truth?

Statistics have made their way into virtually every area of modern society. In every political controversy statistics are produced to justify one claim or another.

Does this mean that statistics are produced by technical criteria but misused? Are statistical methods themselves shaped by vested interests, by political influences and ideological viewpoints? Are statistical results presented to justify decisions or as a means of understanding the needs of society?

Are statistics presented in a fragmented and restricted way which prevents some questions being researched or even asked? Do they often mystify rather than explain? Can they be demystified and made useful to more people?

What do these questions mean for people working in statistics, for research and for teaching? These are amongst the questions which the *Radical Statistics* Group is addressing. If these questions concern you, why don't you join us?

*Concerned  
about valid,  
reliable  
statistics?*

*Worried about  
the integrity of  
statistical  
work?*

## Radical Statistics

## Radical Statistics - who are we?

The Radical Statistics Group was formed in January 1975 by statisticians and research workers with a common concern about the political assumptions and implications of much of their work, and an awareness of the actual and potential misuse of statistics and its techniques. The group is independent from any other organisation, but members are radical in the sense of committed to helping to build a more free, egalitarian and democratic society.

### Our concerns

Among our particular concerns are:

- The mystifying use of technical language in order to disguise social problems as technical ones.
- The lack of control by the community over the aims of statistical investigations, the way these are conducted and the use of information produced.
- The power structures within which statistical workers are employed, and which control the work and the uses to which it is put.
- The fragmentation of problems into separate specialist fields to the detriment of common problems.

### Conference

The group has an administrative 'troika' elected at the annual conference. The conference looks at radical perspectives on statistical methods and the social production of statistics. It also charts the future work of the group.

### Working groups

Much of our work is based around working groups - they have been active on health, education, nuclear issues, race, Nicaragua, women and statistics, and performance indicators. They produce books, pamphlets and papers, and contribute to a range of campaigning issues. Campaign groups often approach us for help and advice - we try to put them in touch with a member who can help.

### Journal

*Radical Statistics* carries articles and news three times a year, initiating debates around our members' interests. Our editorial policy is loose and we encourage all who share our concerns to contribute.

We urge anyone with similar concerns to join the group by completing the back of this leaflet, to make contributions to our newsletter and to join one or more of our working groups.

## Publications

*Choosing schools by numbers? The statistics of school performance.* 4-page broadsheet, 1992. Price including postage: 50p (1 copy), 30p (2-99 copies) 20p (100+ copies).

*Figuring out education spending - trends 1978-85 and their meaning.* 1987. £1 (+30p postage and packing).

*Statistics in Nicaragua.* 1987. £1 (+30p postage and packing).

*Radical Statistics* back issues are available at £1.50 per issue. Recent contents include:

No.56: The politics of mathematics education - Closure of CERC in Paris - Spain's official statistics - Japanese birth rate and school dropouts - Statistics of cold weather deaths

No.55: Undercount in the 1991 census - The presentation of military statistics - Radical Statistics Health Group

See also:

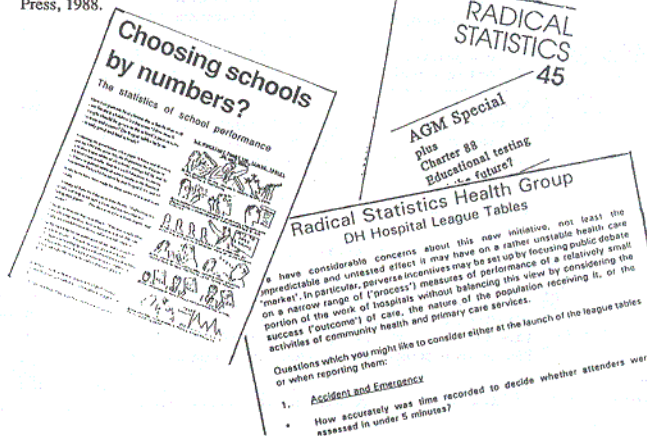
*Demystifying social statistics.* Edited by John Irvine, Ian Miles and Jeff Evans, Pluto Press, 1979.

*Britain's Black Population.* Second Edition, Gower Press, 1988.

Make cheques payable to Radical Statistics and send to *Radical Statistics (publications), c/o*

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A full list of publications since 1975 is available on request.



### **Data Protection Act**

In accordance with the Data Protection Act, any member of the Radical Statistics Group is entitled to ask:

- a) For a printout of his/her personal details and name and address as kept on the Radical Statistics Group computer.
- b) That his/her personal details do not be so stored. Anyone wishing to avail themselves of this right, please contact the Troika (address on inside front cover) with requests in triplicate.

### **Contributions to Radical Statistics**

All readers of Radical Statistics are invited to contribute to the newsletter. Articles may vary from brief notices to detailed articles. Letters and reviews are also welcome. Contributions should be sent to the next editor using the address and guidelines below.

#### **Joint editors for 1998**

**Christina Pantazis**  
School for Policy Studies,  
University of Bristol  
8 Woodland Road  
Clifton  
Bristol BS8 1TN  
Tel 0117 928 9000 ext. 8519  
E-Mail C.Pantazis@bris.ac.uk

**Other Joint Editor to be announced, and  
agreed at A.G.M**

**Deadline for copy: 30th March 1998, June 30th 1998, November 30th 1998**

For those with access to computers the next editor will take contributions preferably on 3.5" DOS discs, using Wordperfect, Microsoft Word, or ASCII text mentioning the hardware the discs were prepared on. Please also include a hard copy of the contribution. Ideally use 2 cm margins, Bookman (or alternative) 13 pt for text, 18 pt bold for subheadings, 18 pt italics for your name, and 24 pt bold for the title. If you haven't got access to a computer, paper is quite acceptable, but a lot of extra work for the editor. Graphs, charts and diagrams should be on paper, in clear print ready to copy.

#### **Refereed articles: an attempt to improve quality**

If you wish comments on your article before publication, please state this and send three copies (but no disc) to one of the editors. Two readers will review your article for clarity and relevance to the concerns of Radical Statistics - see back cover - and may suggest improvements. The editors may then require you to make alterations before publication. Articles not refereed will receive minimal editorial change and are likely to appear in the next issue of the newsletter.



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DON'T WORRY, IT'S JUST SOME NEW INITIATIVE  
TO REDUCE THE OFFICIAL HOMELESS  
STATISTICS

